

Afghanistan

As of 31 December 2019

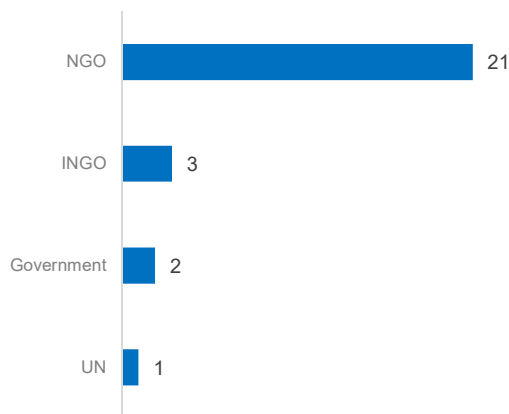
1,120,920 beneficiaries including returnees, IDPs and host communities have been reached directly and indirectly through UNHCR's programmes

436,000 individuals have been displaced by conflict and profiled by OCHA as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in need of protection and assistance (

8,079 registered refugees voluntarily returned to Afghanistan (6,062 returned from Pakistan, 1,939 from Iran and 78 from other countries).

PARTNERS

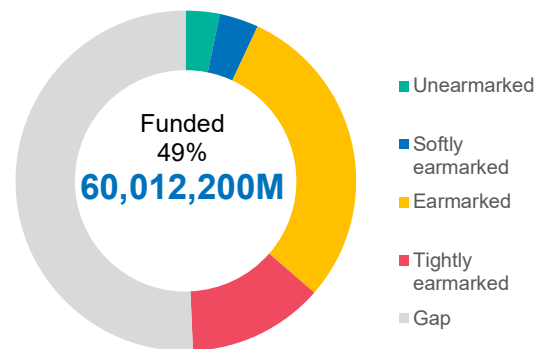
27 partners implementing key UNHCR activities in 2019



FUNDING (AS OF 31 DECEMBER)

USD 121.7 M

requested for Afghanistan



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

185 National Staff

29 International Staff

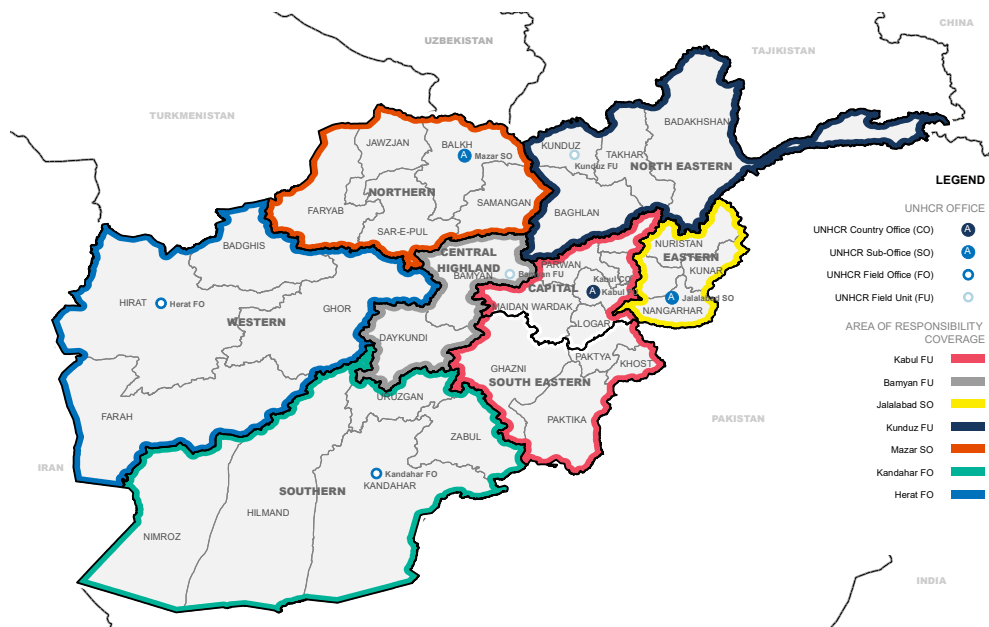
Offices:

1 Country Office in Kabul

2 Sub Offices in Jalalabad and Mazar-i-Sharif

2 Field Offices in Herat and Kandahar

3 Field Units in Kabul, Kunduz and Bamyan



Working with Partners

- UNHCR's partnerships extend beyond partners who implement UNHCR activities. UNHCR's main governmental counterpart is the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) at the national level and the Directorates of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR) at the provincial level.
- UNHCR strengthened its engagement with other line ministries at both the national and local level, including the Ministries of Education, Health, Women's Affairs, Labour and Social Affairs, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and Urban Development and Housing, while working closely with the Afghan Chamber of Commerce, the World Bank, and other UN agencies whose programmes can build on UNHCR's work and provide linkages to longer-term development initiatives.
- Partnerships ranged from developing job placements with the private sector, to linking entrepreneurs and cooperatives with local and international markets, to finding sustainable supply chains and new and emerging opportunities for development.
- In line with the Grand Bargain, UNHCR increased the number of local partners it engages to implement its projects, and in 2019 UNHCR had 3 international, 1 UN, 2 Government and 21 national partners.
- UNHCR is exploring ways to strengthen its collaboration with the humanitarian and development community across the different sectors including IOM, FAO and UNICEF towards galvanizing greater support towards refugees, returnees and displaced communities in Afghanistan.

Main Activities

Voluntary Repatriation

- Voluntary repatriation remains the preferred solution for Afghan refugees, and while the situation in Afghanistan is not presently conducive to support large-scale returns UNHCR is working closely with the Government of Afghanistan and partners – including through cross-border initiatives with Pakistan and Iran – to implement a range of programmes aimed at improving the conditions in Afghanistan to support sustainable returns while ensuring Afghan refugees are able to make informed decisions about going home.
- UNHCR facilitates voluntary repatriation of registered Afghan refugees from Pakistan, Iran and other countries to Afghanistan. The return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran under the Tripartite Agreements with the respective Governments and UNHCR. The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) remains the regional framework.
- More than 5.2 million Afghan refugees have repatriated with UNHCR assistance since 2002 despite a fragile security situation in many parts of the country and a range of socio-economic and political challenges. In 2019, **8,079 refugees returned to Afghanistan (6,062 from Pakistan, 1,939 from Iran and 78 from other countries)**. The rate of returns is lower than in previous years (15,699 in 2018 and 58,817 in 2017) due to the deteriorating and unpredictable security situation, and dire economic conditions.
- Refugee **returnees are provided with a cash grant of an average of US\$200 per person** to meet their immediate humanitarian needs and transportation costs to their place of origin or destination.
- The four **Encashment Centres in Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat and Kabul** are managed by UNHCR and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), and a range of partners provide returnees with important services such as basic health screening and vaccinations for children (provided by Ministry of Public Health with support of UNICEF), mine risk education and awareness (coordinated by the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and the Danish Demining Group/Danish Refugee Council), referral for information and legal assistance to obtain civil documentation, referral of persons with specific needs to partners with specialist expertise or government agencies who provide life-saving assistance.

- Afghanistan is one of the focus countries of a joint UNHCR-WFP project aimed at identifying and mitigating risks of abuse by private sector services providers in their delivery of cash assistance to vulnerable populations.
- Encashment Centres in Kabul, Jalalabad and Kandahar will be closed for the winter break from 1 December 2019 – 1 March 2020. The Encashment Centre in Herat will remain open during for this period.

Community-Based Protection

- UNHCR engages with communities to identify and prioritize their needs and agree on measures that could support returnees, IDPs and refugees in mitigating protection risks, strengthening their resilience and prospects for reintegration, and promoting peaceful coexistence with hosting communities.
- Projects include: asset-based community development to facilitate peaceful coexistence through expansion of community infrastructure, including the construction of schools, clinics, and youth and women's centres; promoting representation, engagement, and participation among communities, with a focus on expanding the involvement of women in decision-making; promoting self-reliance through education, skills training, job creation and business development in partnership with the private sector, including cross-border programming with refugee populations in Pakistan and Iran.
- In 2019, **755,616 individuals benefited from community-based protection projects across Afghanistan.**



A UNHCR-constructed school in Tarakhail Daag, a priority area for return and reintegration in Kabul province, uses solar panels for electricity and water. UNHCR/H.Macdonald

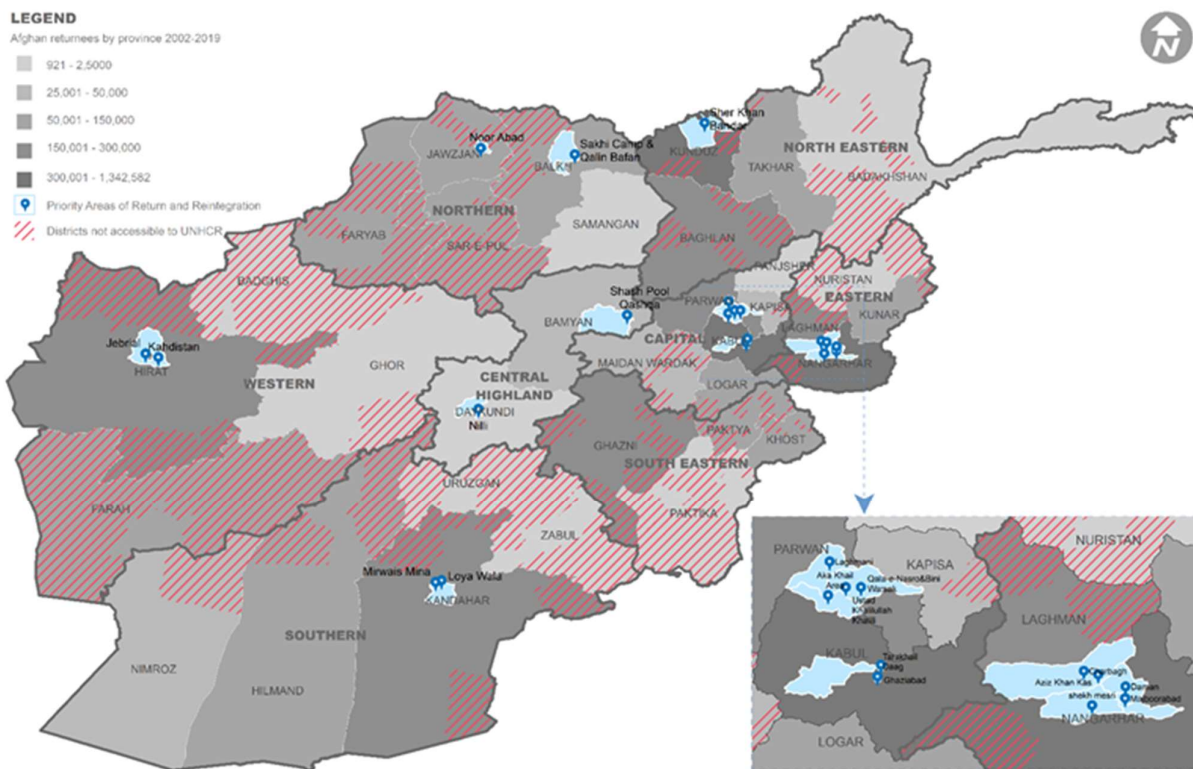
Persons with Specific Needs

- UNHCR provides cash and in-kind assistance, along with referrals to other service providers, to assist persons with acute vulnerabilities and protection risks who are identified at the Encashment Centres or through protection monitoring. UNHCR's programme is implemented through a whole-of-community approach that benefits vulnerable refugees, IDPs, returnees, and members of host communities

- In 2019, 6,914 persons with acute vulnerabilities and protection risks have received cash or in-kind assistance and/or referral to specialized services such as medical assistance, employment, skills development, shelter, food and education.

Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration

- Since the influx of returning refugees from Pakistan and Iran in 2016, UNHCR has implemented a range of solutions-oriented initiatives in communities across Afghanistan that have received displaced persons and returning refugees.
- In line with the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), and more recently the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), 20 areas have been identified through UNHCR's protection monitoring and information management activities. The 20 Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARR) have been prioritized based on government planning in the area, including the Citizen's Charter National Priority Programme, because of the high number of returnees they have absorbed, or because of a range of protection needs the communities may have.
- UNHCR launched the SSAR support platform on the 16 November in Geneva, Switzerland, on the side-lines of the first ever Global Refugee Forum . The platform seeks to i) enhance international solidarity and burden-sharing for the Afghan situation; ii) galvanize additional investments and expand partnerships for coherent humanitarian and development responses; iii) ensure sustained visibility for the Afghan situation.
- While some 105 areas of return and displacement have been identified by UNHCR through comprehensive socioeconomic assessments, the operation is currently implementing projects in 61 locations, with focus on programmes in the 20 PARRs (see map below). These PARR are in locations where UNHCR can link its short- to medium-term community-based protection (CBP) projects to longer-term development programmes. UNHCR's projects are designed to reduce protection risks and to support sustainable return and reintegration.
- In the PARR, 57% of the targeted population are from host communities, many of whom are extremely vulnerable, which helps ensure peaceful co-existence between returnees, IDPs and host communities. UNHCR and its partners have implemented a range of community-based protection projects including infrastructure, community development, WASH, education, business support and shelter. In 2019, 357,190 people have benefited from projects directly or indirectly in the PARR.

20 PRIORITY AREAS OF RETURN AND REINTEGRATION


Protection Monitoring

- UNHCR undertakes protection monitoring through a community-based approach, collecting and analyzing data and trends to inform programming and response and to support advocacy on issues such as access to education, healthcare, land and civil documentation. Protection monitoring is carried out through individual interviews, focus group discussions and phone surveys with refugees, returnees, IDPs and host communities.
- In 2019, **1,744 protection monitoring missions have taken place across Afghanistan** resulting in an increased understanding of protection conditions in different parts of the country to inform programming, assistance and advocacy, and where relevant referrals to PSN and CBP programmes, or other specialized services.
- **Return monitoring** also constitutes an integral part of the protection monitoring system in Afghanistan. It consists of three components: monitoring upon arrival at the encashment centres; monitoring of returnees following their settlement in communities through regular phone surveys; and community-based protection measures. From April 2018, UNHCR has facilitated the distribution of SIM cards (free of charge) with air time of US\$2 per month for 3 months, which aims to ensure returnees' access to communication services and to facilitate return monitoring.
- Following a data sharing agreement in 2017, in June 2019, a **joint UNHCR-World Bank report** titled "Living Conditions and Settlement Decisions of Recent Afghan Returnees: Findings from a 2018 Phone Survey of Afghan Returnees and UNHCR data" was published which looks at the patterns and characteristics of recent Afghan refugee returns.
- In May 2019, UNHCR signed a **data sharing agreement with IOM** to harmonize post return data with joint reporting and analysis through an integrated dashboard. In addition, baseline data for reintegration programming and community selection will be informed by UNHCR protection monitoring and IOM'S Data Tracking Mechanism (DTM).
- **Awaaz Afghanistan**, the inter-agency information centre, implemented by UNOPs, and funded by UNHCR and WFP entered its second year in 2019. The centre provides information to persons of concern on available services in their

geographical area, and allows feedback (including concerns and complaints) from communities to be consolidated and shared with respective agencies including UNHCR.

Emergency Assistance

- UNHCR addresses the emergency needs of IDPs, returnees and host communities through the provision of temporary shelter, non-food items, and cash-based interventions. Along with other humanitarian agencies, UNHCR is gradually shifting the focus of humanitarian assistance to cash-based programming including through mobile money and banking services.
- In 2019, [140,064 beneficiaries have been assisted, in coordination with the Government through non-food items, sanitary kits, emergency shelter and solar panels.](#)

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

- UNHCR continues to support the Government of Afghanistan with the coordination of the response to the approximately 72,065 persons of concern in Khost and Paktika.
- Currently, approximately 12,000 individuals among the population of concern reside in Gulan settlement in Khost. The others reside outside the settlement. Most of the key needs of these individuals (birth registration, education, livelihoods, water and sanitation, health) are common to the broader population and are beyond the ability of any individual organization to address. The Government will require resolute support from humanitarian and development actors including UNHCR
- In 2019, 21,016 refugees and asylum seekers have been assisted with birth registration, NFI distribution, emergency shelter, winterization, and camp management and coordination in Gulan Refugee Camp.
- UNHCR prioritizes interim solutions for the approximately 415 urban refugees and asylum-seekers in Kabul and other locations pending the adoption of a National Asylum Law. UNHCR conducts registration and, as needed, carries out refugee status determination under its mandate as a protection tool. The provision of targeted subsistence allowance and assistance to persons with specific needs (cash-based and in-kind) aims to reduce vulnerability and promote self-reliance.

Durable Solutions

- UNHCR plays a catalytic role in [linking humanitarian action to development](#) programming including projects that provide examples of good practice for development actors to scale up and support local authorities to prepare and implement localized plans and interagency, area-based programming through a CRRF approach. An example is the joint UNHCR, UNDP, ILO and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs initiative “Supporting Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility” (SALAM) which expanded UNHCR and ILO’s good practices in promoting self-reliance of IDPs and returnees through business support and job placement.
- With a particular focus on the 20 priority areas, UNHCR also links its own short- to medium-term CBP projects to longer-term programmes of the [Government of Afghanistan, the World Bank, UN agencies and NGOs](#), such as the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) and the Citizen’s Charter National Priority Programme (NPP) funded by the World Bank. The NPP is currently being implemented in 8 of the 20 PARRs. Eight PARRs also fall within the Government’s Land Allocation Scheme (LAS) sites. UNHCR is working in close coordination with the Ministry of Education on school construction activities to ensure maximum impact and sustainability.
- UNHCR’s programmes support the Government in the implementation of other NPPs, including in relation to private sector development, effective governance, agricultural development, urban development, human capital development, and women’s empowerment.
- UNHCR is also instrumental in providing evidenced-based data and information to inform humanitarian and development programming and advocacy efforts. In the 20 priority areas, UNHCR implements a range of projects

that deliver cash assistance and in-kind support to vulnerable families, improve access to adequate shelter, expand education and skills training, provide entrepreneurial support, implement quick impact livelihoods projects, and develop public infrastructure including schools, healthcare facilities, community centres and roads.

- UNHCR’s programme also promotes durable solutions for returnees and IDPs through efforts to expand access to land, documentation, social services, self-reliance, and inclusion in decision-making structures. UNHCR’s CBP projects focus on mitigating protection risks, both at the individual and community level, and are informed by baseline socio-economic profiling and protection risk and market analyses.
- UNHCR co-chairs the Durable Solutions Working Group and engages with Government and partners countrywide to facilitate implementation of National Priority Programmes.
- Innovative models have been introduced to link humanitarian action with development programmes to facilitate durable solutions, with particular focus on women and youth, such as internet cafes for women, community centres, and artisanal empowerment through UNHCR’s global MADE51 initiative.

Coordination

- UNHCR is the lead agency for the Protection Cluster and the Emergency Shelter/Non-Food Items Cluster, working closely with the Government and partners to coordinate the inter-agency response to the needs of IDPs across the country.

UNHCR appreciates the partnership and financial contributions of both unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds from donors, as well as for those who have contributed regionally and directly to Afghanistan and the Afghan situation:



Sulakshani Perera | External Relations Officer | pererasu@unhcr.org | Cell: +93 (0) 791990011

M. Nader Farhad | Associate Public Information Officer | farhadm@unhcr.org | Cell: + 93 (0) 791990018